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reaching this country. These consuls are able to make a more discriminating investigation in the emigrant's home town than inspectors can make, often hundreds of miles away. There is an opportunity through our consular service for this country to exercise a more effective control over immigration from Mexico if the present passport regulations are continued. If the consuls are to assist in selecting only those for

entry to this country who are physically and mentally fit, who have no criminal record and are not likely to become public charges, every consular office in Mexico must have trained investigators on its staff. The very best system organized to keep out undesirables will, however, prove ineffective unless our government puts into effect some means for policing our long border line.

## The Mexican in Los Angeles from the Standpoint of the Religious Forces of the City

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**T**HREE are approximately 30,000 Mexicans in the city of Los Angeles, composed largely of three distinct groups: the descendants of the original settlers of California, known as "Californians" or "Spanish"; the refugee, representing the cultured classes of pre-Revolution days in Mexico; and the laborer, constituting the large majority of the Mexican population. The "Californians" have found their place in the social life and are loyal American citizens. The refugee has generally located in the better sections of the city and does not present a critical social problem, except for the occasional family which fled to America without funds. The laborer, however, presents a compelling social challenge constituting at once the most serious foreign problem in Los Angeles and the city's largest Americanization opportunity.

Large numbers of Mexicans are crossing the border at the present time, but as yet this influx has not materially affected the Los Angeles situation. The results, therefore, of the recent study conducted by the writer for the Interchurch World Movement will

show clearly the social conditions prevailing among the Mexicans, with which the religious forces of the city must deal in building a new program that seeks the complete transformation of the community life.

This study showed that while real improvement has been made in the reduction of the number of one and two-room dwellings during the last eight years, 28 per cent of the Mexican habitations have no sinks, 32 per cent have no lavatories, and 79 per cent have no bathtubs. The condition of these houses is classified as follows: Good, 5 per cent; fair, 40 per cent; poor, 45 per cent; very bad, 10 per cent. Of the houses, 60 per cent are of frame construction, while 5 per cent are of brick, and 35 per cent are shacks. The worst conditions obtain in the house courts. A house court generally consists of two rows of houses built on a small lot, often with a shorter row of houses between the two at the rear end of the lot. The houses are constructed of rough 1 x 12 ft. pine boards with battened cracks. Thin partitions of similar construction separate the habitations, which consist of two rooms—

one used for living and sleeping, the other for the kitchen. Lack of privacy, inadequate toilet facilities, and overcrowding characterize the courts throughout.

Another serious factor revealed is the high rate of adult illiteracy. Of this group, 55 per cent of the men and 74 per cent of the women can not speak English; 67 per cent of the men and 84 per cent of the women can not read English, and 75 per cent of the men and 85 per cent of the women can not write English. Since these conditions obtain in 1,081 families studied, in which there are 2,073 adults, it would appear that there are more than 10,000 adult Mexicans whose literacy in English would tally with the above figures. It must be stated, however, that the coming generation, owing to the splendid work of the Los Angeles city schools, will read, write and speak English. At present 89 per cent of the children speak, 80 per cent read and 76 per cent write English. However, only a small percentage of the children are in the high schools, probably not more than 5 per cent being in actual attendance.

Sickness and disease reap a frightful toll among the poorer classes of Mexicans. A study of the Ann Street District in the heart of the Mexican section showed that while tuberculosis caused 17.4 per cent of the total deaths of the entire city, it caused 39.2 per cent of the deaths in that district during the same period. Poor and insufficient food, overcrowding and lack of ventilation, lack of facilities for cleanliness, ignorance of personal hygiene coupled with low wages have contributed largely to the tuberculosis menace mentioned, and likewise have developed the high infant mortality rate prevailing among the Mexicans. The infant mortality rate is nearly three times as high among this people as in the city at large.

The result of bad housing, illiteracy, and disease is seen clearly in the records of the Los Angeles County Charities. The Mexican, representing but one-twentieth of the population, contributes nearly one-quarter of the poverty cases handled by the county. Sickness and disease were listed as the major causes in 67 per cent of the cases studied.

These conditions are again reflected in the juvenile delinquency records. Of the 1,379 juvenile delinquents reported by the County Probation Officer for the year 1919, 176 were Mexican. The Mexican children are contributing, therefore, 13 per cent of the juvenile delinquency of the city. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the percentage of crime among adult Mexicans, however, is but little higher than that of the city as a whole. Of the 50,025 arrests made in 1919, but 2,755 were Mexicans or 5.5 per cent of the total.

The wages received by the Mexicans have increased materially since the war, though there is real doubt as to whether the Mexican's condition has been greatly improved, since the increased earnings have been absorbed largely by the increased food costs and the exorbitant rents. Prior to the war, wages ran from \$1.60 to \$2.50 per day, the general average approximating \$2.00.

At present the wage averages \$3.45 per day. This wage is likely to maintain for some time, since there is a steady demand for Mexican labor. It is quite probable that the temporary rule rescinding the head tax and the literacy test of the Immigration Law will be revoked by the Secretary of Labor in the near future, thus automatically shutting out large bodies of Mexican workmen, and holding the demand for Mexican labor at its present level.

The foregoing conditions constitute the challenge flung at the organized religious forces of Los Angeles by the Mexican population. The churches are organizing to remove the intolerable housing conditions, the menace of adult illiteracy, the inroads of disease, and the abnormal poverty situation. Recognizing the close relation of wage scales to these conditions, the churches are likewise concerning themselves with this factor. They frankly face the fact that 80 per cent of the Mexicans have virtually refused to become American citizens, and have come to the conclusion that the anti-social conditions prevailing are a major cause of this refusal. The churches have accepted this challenge and at present are drafting a long time program, seeking the removal of all anti-social forces and the substitution therefor of forces making for more abundant living. The Protestant Churches have invested more than \$350,000 in property, buildings and equipment to carry on religious and social work among the Mexicans. In addition \$260,000 has been raised and will be spent on new buildings in the near future. While the Protestant membership is comparatively small, the institutions are actually serving a constituency of 3,000 families or a total population of between ten and fifteen thousand people. These churches are employing sixty-three social workers and direct the activities of several hundred volunteer workers. The Roman Catholic Church is likewise serving a large constituency through regular churches, and is rendering splendid service at Brownson House, a Catholic social settlement.

The Mexican territory has been allocated between the various Protestant denominations and duplication practically eliminated. The programs of these denominations are quite similar, calling for the erection of thoroughly

equipped community centers, in addition to houses of worship. The Methodist Episcopal Church will raise and spend in the neighborhood of \$500,000 in Mexican work in Los Angeles within the next five years. One branch of this denomination's work is unique. It is known as the Goodwill Industries. Bags are placed in the homes of Los Angeles and vicinity, and cast-off clothing and supplies are collected. This material is taken to the industrial headquarters where it is renovated. Destitute Mexicans are employed in this work and receive wages running from one to several dollars a day. The goods are then sold in the industry stores at low prices. The plan thus affords relief to the unemployed and inefficient, and likewise supplies clothing to the people at prices far below the market prices. The income derived practically supports the work, which in addition includes classes in English, homemaking, hygiene and religious education. Furthermore, men and women are trained in certain trades, such as tailoring, shoemaking and carpentry in the actual work of remaking the supplies received.

To meet the housing situation, official representatives of the various denominations have drafted a program calling for the purchase of tracts of land and the erection of model dwellings to be sold to Mexicans on easy terms which will properly finance the project. They further urge that steps be taken to secure the rigid enforcement of all housing laws, that the church support the request of the Los Angeles Housing Commission for additional inspectors, and that the churches develop an organization of volunteer housing inspectors to coöperate as deputies under the regular city inspectors.

It is further planned to support the home teacher movement in the public

schools, to continue all settlement classes in English and to develop a series of home charts to be used in teaching English and religious matters. It is felt this endeavor will contribute much toward the solution of the adult illiteracy problem. The churches also plan to support the request of the housing commission that it be given authority to inspect one-family dwellings. This is felt to be essential if the campaign against sickness and disease is to be successful. Several churches plan to employ district nurses, some are maintaining clinics and milk stations, and are generally agreed that a preventorium should be provided by the County to which children from tubercular homes may be sent when conditions make adequate prevention in the home impossible. In the matter of poor relief, the churches plan to coöperate fully with the County Charities to eliminate fraud and duplication, and in the direct attack upon poverty to inform the community through its pulpit and press that the largest contributing cause is sickness, the majority of which is preventable. Following

this, it is hoped a definite campaign to remove the causes of most of the sickness will be inaugurated. The churches are also considering definite recommendations in the matter of the support of families bereft of the bread winner. Of the applications for poor relief 29 per cent were traceable to this cause. It is believed that this ministry of constructive friendliness will break down the barrier between the American and the Mexican and that from this friendly relationship will develop a willingness on the part of the Mexican to become an American citizen.

With the constructive programs planned by the churches, the publicity such work will certainly give to the Mexican problems, the willingness on the part of the city through its schools, social agencies, public health and playground departments to serve the Mexican people, it is not too much to hope that the major menaces now surrounding the 30,000 Mexicans of Los Angeles may be largely removed and this group of residents from a neighboring republic be given the opportunity and the desire to attain more abundant living.